

C² 102. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 99 wherein the return electrode is an outer tubular member defining an axial passage between the outer surface of the probe and the inner surface of the outer tubular member, the delivering step including directing the electrically [conducting] conductive fluid through the axial passage to the distal end of the probe over the active electrode [terminal].

C³ 138. (Amended) A method for applying electrical energy to a target site on a body structure on or within a patient's body, the method comprising:

contacting an active electrode with the body structure in the presence of an electrically conductive fluid;

spacing a return electrode away from the body structure in the presence of the electrically conductive fluid; and

applying a high frequency voltage difference between the active electrode [terminal] and the return electrode such that an electrical current flows from the active electrode [terminal], through the electrically conductive fluid, and to the return electrode.

C⁴ 141. (Amended) The method of claim 138 further comprising immersing the target site within a volume of the electrically conductive fluid and positioning the return electrode within the volume of electrically conductive fluid to generate a current flow path between the active electrode [terminal] and the return electrode.

C⁵ 143. (Amended) The method of claim 138 wherein the active electrode [terminal] comprises a single active electrode disposed near the distal end of an instrument shaft.

31 144. (Amended) The method of claim 138 wherein the active electrode [terminal] includes an array of electrically isolated electrode terminals disposed near the distal end of an instrument shaft.

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146. (Amended) The method of claim 138 including independently controlling current flow to the active electrode [terminal] based on electrical impedance between the active electrode [terminal] and the return electrode.

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147. (Amended) The method of claim 138 wherein the return electrode is spaced from the active electrode [terminal] such that when the active electrode [terminal] is brought adjacent a tissue structure immersed in electrically conductive fluid, the return electrode is spaced from the tissue structure and the electrically conductive fluid completes a conduction path between the active electrode [terminal] and the return electrode.

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148. (Amended) The method of claim 138, wherein the return electrode is located on a distal end of a probe, further comprising an insulating matrix at the distal tip of the probe between the return electrode and the active electrode [terminal], the insulating matrix comprising an inorganic material.

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150. (Amended) The method of claim 138 further comprising applying a sufficient voltage difference between the return electrode and the active electrode [terminal] to effect the electrical breakdown of tissue in the immediate vicinity of the active electrode [terminal].

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151. (Amended) The method of claim 138 further comprising measuring the temperature at the target site and limiting power delivery to the active electrode [terminal] if the measured temperature exceeds a threshold value.

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152. (Amended) The method of claim 138 further comprising applying a sufficient high frequency voltage difference to vaporize the electrically conductive fluid in a thin layer over at least a portion of the active electrode [terminal] and to induce the discharge of energy to the target site in contact with the vapor layer.

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